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The Early Religion of Israel, by Professor James Robertson.

Blackwood & Sons, 1892.

As the critical interpretation of the Old Testament, its literature and its religion, becomes more widely diffused and more generally adopted, it is curious to observe with what a variety of doctrinal views this interpretation seems to consort and be combined. Moreover, as it slowly wins its way, all kinds of approaches towards it, partial acceptances, half-and-half agreements, are put forward for discussion and approval. The rigidest traditionalism seems abandoned by most cultivated persons, whether Jews or Christians, but every kind of effort is being made to show either how very little doctrinal change is a necessary sequitur of critical results, or how very little these results themselves imply. Sometimes, too, the aim is to show that the more advanced critics are foolhardy and unworthy of belief, that they are building castles in the air, that while their minute investigation of every word and sentence in Holy Writ is deserving of all praise—here the apologist assumes an air of polite condescension—yet when they begin to fashion a constructive theory of their own, acumen and common sense alike desert them wholly. A little readjustment of the old traditionalism is all that is needed to bring it into accord with true criticism, and to make it bomb proof against all assaults of the extremists.

As regards their attitude towards revelation and miracles, some of the men who stand between a writer like Kuenen on the one hand and any antique and isolated defender of hide-bound traditionalism on the other, are not always as clear as might be wished. But the shades and *nuances* are numerous enough. Some writers, perhaps purposely, or because of the overwhelming difficulties of their official positions, or through a wise prudence which is by no means to be identified off-hand with cowardice or hypocrisy, do not definitely say whether they believe the miracles or no. Some, like Dr. Briggs, if I understand him rightly, struggle to combine a high critical position with a somewhat full belief in the accuracy of the recorded incidents and marvels. Some, like Mr. Gore, seem disposed to throw over the Old Testament miracles altogether, and yet accept the miracles of the New, a curious *via media*, which an impartial outsider would find it hard to understand or to condone. Some attempt to discover a good meaning for revelation with a frank disavowal of miracle. Many of these attempts, and, of course, I would not dream of excluding any fragments which I too may have contributed to this fascinating subject, time will doubtless prove to be inadequate, arbitrary, evanescent. But out of them time may produce something truer, deeper, more permanent.

Again, between Kuenen's view of the order and dates of the component parts of the Pentateuch and his view of the history and growth of the Israelite religion before and up to Amos—between Kuenen's view of all this, and, as Professor Robertson would love to say, the view of the Old Testament itself, there is still a variety of intermediate steps. Graf's famous hypothesis may be still denied, as by Dillmann, Kittel, Baudissin, and (apparently) Professor Robertson, or it may be accepted as by Driver, Kamphausen, König; and yet among the men who accept and among the men who deny, there still can prevail a wide difference concerning, for example, the teaching of Moses, the divine element in the Old Testament, and the character of the pre-prophetic religion.

For all this variety of opinion there is more than one accounting reason. The great Kuenen would himself, I feel pretty sure, have freely acknowledged that it is not only the reaction of new ideas upon old ideas, of new truth upon old opinions, not only the varying extent to which we may be able to absorb the new or the manner in which we assimilate it, which produce the conflict and the turmoil, but also the extreme difficulty of the subject.

Our determining records are so scanty. For example, Professor Robertson does well to put the prophecies of Amos and Hosea in the forefront of his inquiry. Assuming that we have in the books which bear their name authentic products of two Israelite prophets of the eighth century B.C., it is clear that a full and complete reply to the question what do Amos and Hosea imply, would go far to answer some of the most important and disputed problems in Old Testament criticism. It is, however, obvious that the words and the silences of Amos and Hosea in their twenty-three short chapters can be interpreted in different ways.

How, then, does Professor Robertson, whose book on the *Early Religion of Israel* is being so vigorously championed by English opponents of Wellhausen, stand towards all these questions? What exactly does he want to prove? He uses very hard and uncivil words about the "critics." Are they wrong in their partition of the Pentateuch? That he does not clearly inform us. It is not clear whether he accepts the miracles or rejects them. Does he think all the statements in the Pentateuch true? Do they never contradict each other? Were the conversations between God and Abraham, or between God and Moses, accurately reported, and how were they preserved? Were the laws in the Pentateuch, or any of them, directly given by God to Moses, or did Moses think that God had ordered them, and which of all the laws that are put into God's mouth, were (a) spoken by God, or (b) written by Moses?

I have read Professor Robertson's book, read it as a whole twice through, and parts of it repeatedly, but when I have framed to myself definite questions like these, while I know how Kuenen or Wellhausen would answer them, while I know too how an old-fashioned Jewish or Christian believer, who had never heard the word criticism, would answer them, I do not exactly know how Professor Robertson would answer them. In his views as to the early religion of Israel, where exactly does he draw the line between the old-fashioned believer and Professors Wellhausen and Stade? It is of course, obvious that he does draw the line somewhere. Let me add, moreover, that so do I, only I draw it nearer Wellhausen and Stade than does Professor Robertson. It is right, therefore, to emphasize the fact, both for those who desire to make their peace with criticism, and for those who do not desire to become disciples of the more thorough-going critics if they can conscientiously avoid it, that there are at present many resting places between Professor Robertson on the one hand, and Kuenen, Stade and Wellhausen upon the other. For if the issue really lay between Wellhausen and Robertson, then I fear there could be little doubt to which side the victory must incline. Let an impartial outsider, if such a creature can be found, work his way through the *Prolegomena* first, and then through the *Early Religion of Israel*, and though Professor Robertson has had all the advantages of attack and reply, I feel that a verdict in favour of Wellhausen would be unwavering and irremediable. The outsider will do well, therefore, to remember that while, for instance, on the crucial question of the Pentateuch, Dillmann is at daggers drawn with Wellhausen, while Driver, agreeing with Wellhausen, is thus herein opposed to Dillmann, yet, as regards the history of Israel's religion, Driver would, I believe, by no means accept the conclusions of Wellhausen, and Dillmann would certainly not accept the dangerous statements of Professor Robertson.

To deal adequately with Professor Robertson's book, and show how much nearer the truth must lie to Wellhausen, or even to Kittel than to him, would demand too much space. Professor Robertson has not won his spurs for nothing, and if he can be refuted at all, he needs, as he deserves, no curt and casual refutation. Let me rather take one or two leading propositions of his work, and see how far they are established.

Let us first return to Amos and Hosea, the bulk of whose prophecies at any rate is acknowledged by even the extremer German school to be genuine literary survivals of the eighth century B.C. What do they imply? Professor Robertson's contention is, first, that Kuenen, Stade and Wellhausen do not explain the admitted phenomenon of

these men writing such words at such a time and on the basis of a religion such as they, the critics, have described ; and secondly, that if you fairly interrogate Amos and Hosea, you get a different view of the previous religious history from what the critics have elaborated to suit their "naturalistic" theories. By the way, "naturalistic" seems to me an unfortunate adjective with which to cudgel the critical historians, in spite of the opening sentences of Kuenen's *Religion of Israel*. Renan was a "naturalistic" historian, but Kuenen, who believed in God's rule of the world, was not. Because you believe that God's spiritual revelation in human history was not conducted by different laws and methods in Persia than in Judæa, or in Judæa than in Greece, you are not, on that account, rightly dubbed by anybody who believes in exceptions and varieties of Divine rule, a naturalistic historian.

I have myself maintained in the pages of this REVIEW a portion of the same thesis as Professor Robertson. I also do not think that the three great critics, to upset whom is the main purport of the Professor's book, have adequately explained the appearance of Amos and Hosea. I believe that a greater ethical element must be allowed, both to the original teaching of Moses and to the pre-prophetic religion generally, than is granted by Stade. But at the same time, so far as we can gather, the prophets of the eighth century did make an immense advance in the religion of Israel. The argument from the elegant style of Amos can be pushed too far. Amos gives one a totally different impression from Elijah, and it would at least appear as if the beginning of written prophecy can hardly be pushed back behind the opening of the eighth century. Wellhausen (*Kleine Propheten*, p. 67, n. 1) says rightly : "Der prophetische Stil erscheint bei Amos schon ganz fest ausgebildet (viel früher als bei Hosea) ; das ist aber zweifellos nicht erst durch die Schrift, sondern schon durch die mündliche Rede geschehen." Moreover, you can never explain your great men adequately. They do make a jump beyond their conditions or their circumstances, without which it is true that they would have been impossible. Was not Æschylus an immense advance upon his predecessors in tragedy ? Did not Socrates inaugurate a new departure in philosophy ? The historian of Israel need not, at all events, explain Amos and Hosea more fully than the historian of Greece has to explain Æschylus and Socrates.

Professor Robertson lays stress upon the fact that "the people seem to understand quite well all that is said to them. There is a religious phraseology in existence—a religious consciousness equal to comprehend it" (p. 68).¹ But, after all, they are fairly simple words

¹ My references are to the *first* edition.

which Amos and Hosea use, and even the metaphors are those which an agricultural people would easily understand. Moreover, they *do* try to improve or change the meaning of the popular phraseology. "The day of Yahveh" to Amos means something quite different from what it meant to his first hearers. To the people generally, Yahveh's knowledge of Israel means protection; to Amos it means punishment for iniquity. Indeed, although Amos and Hosea both appeal to the witness of earlier prophets, they have little but condemnation for their contemporaries. These do not understand what Yahveh's religion is; they *do* think it means sacrifice, and not loving kindness—burnt-offerings rather than the knowledge of God. And, in spite of the prophets, the mass of the people went on thinking so till the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem. No one supposes that an ordinary citizen of Israel or Judah believed that he *ought* to do evil rather than to do good, or that Yahveh was really pleased with oppression, murder and theft. In that sense the prophets were not telling a new truth. But between these admissions and the prophetic teaching as a whole, the interval is surely enormous. It is, therefore, amazing that Professor Robertson should say, "From the beginning to the end there cannot be found a passage in which a prophet speaks as if he were uttering a new or strange truth; and there are many expressions plainly implying that they were simply enforcing what they *and their hearers* accepted as undisputed and indisputable" (p. 159).¹ Does Professor Robertson suppose that the prophetic teaching about the character of Yahveh, the method of his rule, and the value of sacrifices were really, even if the prophets themselves supposed that they were uttering mere platitudes, "accepted by their hearers as undisputed and indisputable"? What the many expressions which "plainly imply" this may be, our author leaves unsaid. In another connection Professor Robertson is willing to allow, and even to urge, that the prophets were really innovators. "Are there not men who mould their age?" he says of them. "Are there not men in advance of their age?" (p. 152). This is precisely what the critics, within the limits of possibility, maintain. But if the prophets were merely enforcing what their hearers accepted as undisputed and indisputable, if the hearers of Hosea were at one with him, not only as regards the facts of Israel's past history, but also as to their significance (p. 157), I do not see where the moulding and the epoch-making advance come in.

Professor Robertson is altogether, I think, too much inclined to draw big inferences from narrow premisses. Nor does he distinguish properly between Amos and Hosea. He makes, for example, the

¹ The italics throughout are mine.

strange remark that the general reviews of the popular religion which the Israelitish historians lay before us—from which Kuenen says the current conceptions have been derived—are “precisely in the tone of the prophets Amos and Hosea, the very earliest witnesses to whom we are allowed to appeal” (p. 116). “In other words,” the reviews are not necessarily Deuteronomistic at all; but, “the narratives and the summaries may be of the same date, and may have been written by the same persons” (p. 117). I cannot help re-echoing the wish of a reviewer in the *Academy*, that Kittel’s *Geschichte der Hebräer* were translated into English. Then the lazy student or the average outsider could see from a *prominent opponent* of Wellhausen how hopeless this statement of Professor Robertson’s really is.

Where in Amos is that conception of Israel’s history between Joshua and the monarchy which we find in the “review” in the Book of Judges? Where the “rhythmic” recurrence of apostasy, punishment, contrition and deliverance? It is wholly absent. Amos complains of moral iniquity and of the false worship of Yahveh; once only at most that Yahveh has been abandoned for other gods. Nor is the “rhythmic recurrence” to be found in Hosea. It is true that moulding, and in advance of, his age as Hosea was, the movement which culminates in the Deuteronomistic edition of the historical books begins historically with him. Deuteronomy was notoriously greatly influenced by and modelled upon the teaching of Hosea. But even Hosea’s view of the past history does not tally with that of the historical editors. His complaints are still very largely the same as those of Amos. It is mainly the moral sins of the people for which the punishment was to ensue, and hence we get the absolute contradiction of judgment between Hosea i. 4 and 2 Kings x. 30. To these moral sins Hosea adds the material worship of Yahveh under the symbol or form of a bull. But it is much more this degraded service of the national God which Hosea means to reprehend, even when he stigmatises it as Baal worship, than any direct abandonment of Yahveh. Moreover, that the altars of Israel were in themselves schismatical he is absolutely unaware. How inaccurate, then, is the statement that the “reviews” are *precisely in the tone* of Amos and Hosea. Far worse is the other statement that “the narratives and summaries may be of the same date, and may have been written by the same persons”; but it is impossible to follow up the matter further in this place. I may, however, add that Hosea’s view of the early wilderness history is less pessimistic than that of Deuteronomy, just as Deuteronomy is less pessimistic than Ezekiel. Hosea repeatedly refers to the wilderness period as one in which Israel was faithful to Yahveh (ii. 14, 15; xi. 1; xii. 9; xiii. 4, 5). It is re-

markable that he does not seem to know, or at least makes no use of, the story of the golden calf. He dates the religious fall of Israel from the time when in Shittim he "joined himself unto Baal-peor" (Numbers xxv. 1-5 ; Hosea ix. 10 ; cp. Wellhausen's note). Deuteronomy, on the other hand, lays stress upon the earlier apostasy.

Now, in the next place, what do Amos and Hosea imply as to the work of Moses and the legislation of the Pentateuch. It is generally supposed that they were acquainted with the narrative of the Yahvist. Some, for example Kittel (*Geschichte* I., p. 74), think that the narrative of the Elohist was known to them also. At any rate, it is obvious that Hosea was conversant with the stories about the patriarchs, and that in alluding to them he assumes a certain familiarity on the part of his hearers. But this is a very different thing from concluding that "by the time of Hosea we can see that the stories of the patriarchs were not only well known, but used, we may say, as texts for discourses, and handled in a homiletic and didactic manner" (pp. 96, 109, 110). No doubt the stories were well known, but I see no evidence that they were familiar to the people as texts for discourses ; rather were they the simple tales such as any people might be imagined to gladly hear about its ancestors' fortunes, and their intimate relation with the national God. That Hosea's hearers were at one with him not only as regards the facts of the history, but also as to their significance, may be asserted (p. 157), but cannot be proved.

While Professor Robertson allows that it is "somewhat remarkable that so little is said of Moses by the earlier prophets" (p. 350), he tries to minimise the importance of this fact by dwelling on the precariousness of the "argument from silence." I do not think the matter can be so easily disposed of, although a similar strange silence is still preserved even by later prophets. If the Decalogue had not only been in existence before the eighth century, but had held the same place in the national consciousness as it holds in the consciousness of the authors of Deuteronomy iv. and v., it seems almost impossible that allusion should not have been made to it by the prophetic writers. Still stranger would it be, if Moses in Hosea's age had been known as the great lawgiver *par excellence*, that Hosea should not allude to the Mosaic law. He only refers to Moses as the prophet by whom God brought Israel out of Egypt. Professor Robertson is sadly put to it when he wants to show that the prophetic evidence is not adverse to the existence of an acknowledged and a written moral and ritual law of Moses in and before the prophetic age. It is well known that Wellhausen's theory is that the *Torah* of the priests to which the prophets refer was "chiefly confined to law and morals,"

and was mainly oral. What all of us who in this matter wholly agree with Wellhausen, Stade, and Kuenen desire to maintain—and what, indeed, we think wholly incontrovertible—is that the prophets never allude to the priestly code, or, so far as the eighth century prophets are concerned, to the law of Deuteronomy. They never allude to them because these codes were not in existence when they wrote. So far as I understand Professor Robertson—but he is far from clear on these crucial questions—he rejects the critical view about Deuteronomy (in which Dillmann and Kittel agree with Stade and Wellhausen) no less than he rejects the critical view about the priestly code. *Apparently* he believes (and what most people consider a difficulty in the matter he thinks “the most natural thing in the world”) that all the three codes of the Pentateuch, in spite of their differences in style and contents, were written down in a somewhat shorter form than that in which we now possess them by Moses himself. I may be exaggerating our author’s conservatism, but I fancy that his words imply a belief of this kind, a belief which, be it remembered, Kittel and Dillmann and Baudissin would discountenance no less than Stade and Wellhausen.

Now, in the first place, how much can he get towards the support of this theory out of Amos or Hosea? Exiguously little. That the eighth century prophets never quote or definitely allude to Deuteronomy or the Priestly code matters apparently little. “To look for positive citations of the Books of the Pentateuch” was a mistaken method of the older apologetics (p. 339). Nevertheless, in chapter xiv. we are told that, “We have seen in the last chapter good reason for concluding” not only that “the priestly Torah was mainly, or we should rather say fundamentally, of a moral character,” but that “the prophets knew of and recognised a ritual law as well” (p. 357). And this, of course, is the most knotty point of all. Professor Robertson wants to rebut Wellhausen’s assertion, “That in pre-exilic antiquity the priests’ own praxis (at the altar) never constituted the contents of the Torah, but that their Torah always consisted of instructions to the laity” (*Religion of Israel*, p. 59, n. 1, quoted by Robertson, p. 355). One turns, then, with much interest to chapter xiii. What is the evidence there adduced, on the basis of which our author declares that there is good reason for concluding that “the prophets knew of and recognised a ritual law as well”? And, be it remembered, that Professor Robertson can only mean a *written* ritual law. Amos iv. 4, 5 is justly put in a foot note: the allusions (?) are “not pressed.” To obtain evidence for the knowledge of a ritual written law out of Amos iv. 4, 5 would, indeed, be the last resort of the destitute. Again, the corrupt passage (*pace* Professor

Robertson) in Hosea iv. 4 is only referred to in a note at the end of the book (p. 512). At the best that verse could only be construed into an acquaintance with the law of Deuteronomy. Amos ii. 4, even if authentic, must, in the connection where it stands, refer to moral ordinances only, whether these were written in a book or not. Hosea viii. 1 is similar. Professor Robertson himself says about both this verse and vii. 13, "The sins for which Hosea reproves the men of Israel of his time are just such sins as the *moral* laws of the Mosaic legislation condemn" (p. 342). The whole burden and proof for the prophet's acquaintance with a *ritual* law has to be supported by Hosea viii. 12, 13, and by a single pronoun in Isaiah i. 12. Hosea viii. 12, with a slight emendation, to which Professor Robertson does not object, is thus translated by Wellhausen:—"Schreib ich ihm noch so viel Weisungen vor, sie werden geachtet wie die eines Fremden" (he reads רב תורתִי). This passage does certainly demonstrate the existence of written collections of law, such as our Book of the Covenant. Wellhausen's note runs thus, "Was versteht Hosea unter den zahlreichen Weisungen? Jedenfalls keine Cultusgesetze . . . sondern offenbar Weisungen über die דעות אלהים, die also damals auch schon aufgezeichnet vorlagen." Wellhausen, therefore, freely allows the existence of written laws in Hosea's age. But then Professor Robertson continues thus: "As if to assure us that ritual ordinance was as well known as moral precept" (written ritual ordinance is implied), "the prophet goes on in the following verse to say, 'As for the sacrifices of *mine* offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it'" (p. 344). Everything is made to depend on the "single suffixal *mine*," which here and in Isaiah i. 12 ("to tread *my* courts"), is held to prove sufficiently that Israel in Isaiah and Hosea's age "had a law of worship which was undisputed, and that the Temple, set apart to the outward service of the national God, was provided with an authoritative [*i.e.*, I suppose a written] order and ritual." Was ever a more important conclusion made to depend on more vague and shadowy evidence? To begin with, the word translated "mine offerings" in Hosea is an obscure *hapax legomenon*, and very probably corrupt. But even if it is perfectly genuine, what does the suffix here and in Isaiah prove? Of course the offerings were rendered to Yahveh, and the Temple was dedicated to his service. Therefore, in that sense both were his. They were his whether there existed a written ritual Torah or whether there did not. Nobody supposes that Hosea and Isaiah desired to abolish sacrifices. They only wished to see them assessed at a proper, that is, at a comparatively low estimate, and freed from all idolatrous accretion. If the suffix "my" in the Hosea passage could be used to prove anything at all, it must be this, that Hosea was wholly ignorant of the

Deuteronomic law. For to the authors of Deuteronomy the sacrifices of the northern altars were not offered to Yahveh at all, but were schismatic and idolatrous. So much for the evidence from Amos and Hosea, from which our author thinks himself justified in assuming that the prophets knew of and recognised an authoritative ritual law.

As I have already said, Professor Robertson's attitude towards the Pentateuchal question is never clearly defined. He bids us remember that "there are three things which are easily distinguishable, and which ought to be kept distinct in our minds. These are, (*a*) the origin of laws and observances; (*b*) the codification of laws, or the formal ratification of observances; and (*c*) the composition of the books in which we find the laws finally embodied or the ordinances described" (p. 331). The distinction is a most proper one, and I should have thought that it had been specially insisted on by the critical school. In what points is Professor Robertson at issue with the most general results of that school? And first as to the existence of the three codes. Have these codes, viz., the Book of the Covenant (Exodus xxi.-xxiii.), the Law of Deuteronomy, and the Priestly Legislation, each a separate origin, whatever may be their relative dates? It is of very little value for Professor Robertson to suggest general *a priori* objections to the critical partition of the Pentateuch, so long as he refuses to tell us his own views on the most elementary and yet crucial questions of all. He seems to think that there was a considerable mass of Mosaic law, really given, and, I suppose, really written, by Moses, and that this mass of law was split up, enlarged, modified in the course of ages, and yet remained Mosaic; and that upon this mass of law, thus split up, enlarged, modified, and then codified, three editors drew as their material out of which to produce, *perhaps* in the ninth century, *perhaps* in the seventh century, and *perhaps* in the fifth century, the Book of the Covenant, the Law of Deuteronomy, and the Priestly Legislation respectively. Whenever then you want to produce a new code, there is, as it would appear, an inexhaustible mass of good Mosaic law on which to draw. A strange theory certainly, which will hardly be substantiated either by an insistence upon "the uniform tradition that Moses gave laws and ordinances to Israel" (p. 335), or by assertions that Professor Robertson's view of what Moses probably did was "the most natural thing in the world" (p. 337; cf. "It was naturally to be expected," "There is a natural tendency," on the same page). It is very curious that the mere editorial or transcribing work of getting the floating and unused-up mass of Mosaic material into the three codes, should have produced such strangely dissimilar results, should have produced codes each with its own peculiar mark, character and style, and each on

certain important points contradicting the other two! But then, Professor Robertson will not allow the contradictions. We shall get an instance of that further on.

One obvious object of Professor Robertson's theories is to preserve, as he thinks, the authenticity of the codes, and to do away with the "pseudo-historical" character which Deuteronomy assumes from the critical point of view. He urges that "while it is said that Moses wrote the Laws of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic code, it is not said that he wrote the Levitical laws, nor are we told who wrote them" (p. 332). But, nevertheless, the laws of all the three codes "are in their origin and character Mosaic," and our author gives a sort of half-and-half or despairing adhesion to the Biblical view itself, that all the three codes were promulgated by Moses at different periods of his life (pp. 384, 385). One would have thought that if it is said that Moses wrote the Laws of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic code, you hardly preserve the accuracy of the statement, or excuse the interpolations of the editors, if the laws of these codes are only "in their origin and character Mosaic." But, passing over Deuteronomy for the moment, is the desired result achieved even as to the Levitical code? It is not said that Moses wrote the Levitical laws, but each chapter or section of the Levitical legislation is opened by such words as "And Yahveh spake unto Moses, saying." Now if Professor Robertson means that to the original Mosaic form of that legislation a verse has been added, or a law modified, here and there, to suit the changing requirements of the age, well and good. But if by a Mosaic origin and character he means only that there is a certain Mosaic residuum, then it seems to me that the pseudo-historical aspect of the words "And Yahveh spake unto Moses, saying," is by no means removed even by his own chosen theory.¹ If you look at the matter from a modern point of view and judge the editors accordingly, you do not get over the difficulty by saying :—

Seeing that practice, in regard to some things at least, varied, and there

¹ According to Professor Robertson on a "common sense" (*i.e.* his) mode of viewing the matter, "the headings mean no more than that the laws originally came from Mosaic times" (p. 437). The laws originally? As they now stand? Or one or two of them? Still the same uncertainty. Professor Robertson is easily contented; but then, he doubtless knows more than he will let the reader know. "Even if," he says, "the final codification took place as late as Ezra, the code, and still more the institutions, may with propriety and substantial accuracy be described as Mosaic." "The history is satisfied, and the *bona fides* of the writers maintained." I cannot help feeling that history is satisfied with very little, and that the *bona fides* has been very ignominiously won.

was no hesitation about introducing certain alterations in the observances, the transcriber in a later age, in writing out a code for practical use, might, so to speak, translate the details of prevailing ordinances into the language of his own time, and describe the thing in the form in which he knew it (p. 385).

Very cautious. And yet, I think, that the "wooden-headed" critics, as our author politely calls Wellhausen, could use this cautious sentence for their own theories. It may truly mean much or little.

But Professor Robertson even ventures to tackle the Book of Deuteronomy as it stands, addresses and all. One would have thought that the marked style of those introductory chapters was obviously the result of more than mere editing, and that here, if anywhere, the theory of a Mosaic original must be abandoned. But no; once more the *a priori* argument comes to our author's assistance. The dramatic situation of Deuteronomy is "the most natural thing in the world"; that Moses spoke much as he is there made to speak "is surely most reasonable to assume." Therefore we fall back upon the unknown mass of unknown Mosaic material. There must have been "a Deuteronomic code prior to the Book of Deuteronomy" (p. 426), and not merely a code of laws, but addresses, warnings, exhortations. And so once more we have the same vacillation.

It is easy to see now how a writer soon after or *long after* Moses, recalling the events which we may suppose tradition preserved in the nation's mind, and using we know not what documents, produced a book like Deuteronomy (p. 424).

According to this statement and several which follow it on the same page, the Mosaic element in Deuteronomy might be exiguous indeed. But two pages further on the question is asked, "Did the code, *in a written form and to an appreciable extent*, come from Moses himself?" and the reader is meant to understand that the correct answer is in the affirmative. (Then we *do* know some of the documents, at all events, which the editor used.) Lastly, on p. 427, it is said that even if, as a book, Deuteronomy belongs to the age of Josiah or later, it preserves "*elements* which are ancient and Mosaic." I am in error: to this "lastly," a further "lastly" is still to come, for in note xxviii., p. 516, we are finally told that:—

We get a more reasonable view of the matter if we suppose that it (Deuteronomy) is the final expression, in the light of history, of views that had been germinating in the minds of good men from the days of Moses, the exposition of principles so firmly rooted in their minds, that the writers *in all sincerity regarded them as Mosaic*.

After all these various theories, I think we may hold that the critical view has not yet been finally overthrown.

I cannot follow Professor Robertson in his further discussion on

the several codes and their institutions. I could only call attention to two points. One is the really unfortunate statement on p. 417, by which it would appear as if the critics said of the Pentateuchal narratives generally that "they must follow the laws," whereas in fact it is only of the narrative which accompanies the Priestly Laws that this is said. The whole of the argument on pp. 417-419 falls therefore to the ground.

My other point concerns a famous verse in the Book of the Covenant which gives our author no little trouble. It is the verse Exod. xx. 24 : "In every place where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." The great novelty about the Book of Deuteronomy according to the critical view is the unity of worship which it demands. Plurality of worship is admitted in the earlier code. But Professor Robertson cannot allow that any of the codes have anything particularly novel about them, for are they not in origin and character all equally Mosaic? He consequently has to maintain the astonishing thesis that centralisation of worship was the ideal from the first, but that it gained realisation by slow degrees (p. 404), and also that "the ideal even in the Book of the Covenant is that of a central sanctuary" (p. 407). That is to say the verse in Exodus xx. must mean the very opposite of what it apparently does mean, viz., that worship is assumed at more than one hallowed, or to be hallowed spot. Let those who think that Professor Robertson has annihilated the critics read how he deals with this verse which is closely connected with the very key to the critical position. It really will be an object lesson for them by which to learn, that though our author has made several valuable suggestions, he has left the critical position itself just where he found it, not only uncaptured, but not even seriously affected by all his heaviest artillery. Exodus xx. 24 is, first of all, "a protest against the localising tendency of other religions, an assurance that God could and would come near to bless his people in every place where he recorded his name" (p. 407). And again, "at most, the words may imply the acceptable worship of Jahveh at a *number of successive places*, but they do not necessarily, nor perhaps possibly, imply the recognition of simultaneous sanctuaries in different places. With this idea the whole tone of the passage is at variance" (p. 410). Special pleading of this kind will not upset the critics; wooden-headed as they are, they can withstand yet harder knocks and not be crushed. I do not suppose that any reader of Hebrew who came upon this verse for the first time, without prejudice one way or the other, could by any possibility suppose that the words could conceivably refer to a number of successive places, or that they do not necessarily imply the recognition of simultaneous sanctuaries in different places.

Another main intention of Professor Robertson's book is to bridge over the chasm which is commonly supposed to exist between the prophetic and the pre-prophetic religion. I have myself argued that the interval between them must not be made too wide, otherwise the very appearance of Amos becomes a greater puzzle than it had been before, and Professor Robertson, following on the lines of Professor Davidson, in his interesting articles on Deborah and Amos in the *Expositor*, argues suggestively and with much ability in the same strain. With Kamphausen, Kittel and others, I have urged both in the Hibbert lectures and elsewhere, that some ethical element must be ascribed to the teaching of Moses, otherwise the subsequent development in course of history becomes very difficult to explain. Professor Siegfried has lately declared that my earlier arguments were wholly untenable, and he will probably approve none the more of Professor Robertson's. All the same, I think the line taken, *e.g.* on pp. 264 and 301, is fundamentally sound. Where, however, I join issue with Professor Robertson, is that he seems to me to elevate the teaching of Moses and the pre-prophetic religion too much. He errs upon the one side more than Stade errs upon the other. One does not see from his book what the advance of the prophets really was. To him, Moses was apparently as monotheistic as Amos. Wholly unsound, I think, are his attempts to push the historic period further back still, and to resuscitate the Patriarchs, not only as historic personages, but as the possessors of a high spiritual faith (pp. 121-135, 480, 487). But on this I have no space to dwell.

How does our author account for or explain away all those lower religious phenomena which we find set forth to us, *e.g.*, in Stade's huge chapter on the pre-prophetic Israel? Not very successfully. He has three or four main arguments.

The first is that there was a corrupt popular religion as well as a Mosaic religion. After Moses, Canaanite corruption set in, and even over and above this influence you have to remember "the hard granite of underlying superstition cropping up everywhere in human history" (p. 207). Before Abraham, the ancestors of Israel were idolaters, (p. 161, but cf. p. 487) and "the sojourn in Egypt had a deteriorating influence on the old patriarchal faith." This argument, however, is obviously precarious. If the teaching of Moses had been as high and wide as Professor Robertson believes, it is unlikely that the corruption would have eaten in so deep. If, again, our earliest literary documents of the ninth and tenth centuries do show all kinds of "superstitions," it is surely very unsafe to argue that the religion of Moses, and still more the religion of Abraham, of which we can only speak by induction and inference, were free from this alloy. So,

in the second place, our author essays to show that the pre-prophetic religion was not so bad as it looks. He has to explain unpleasant appearances away. To do this he makes much of what I may call the metaphorical argument. "Thought is at all times limited and circumscribed when it sets itself to give expression to supersensible things; forms more or less crude and language necessarily metaphorical must be resorted to" (p. 204). "But metaphorical language may be employed by a people long after they have passed beyond a primitive stage of intelligence" (p. 287); we use anthropomorphisms and so on. And some metaphors were always metaphors, and certain conclusions from them which critics have drawn would then only be justifiable "if these metaphorical experiences when originally used were not regarded as metaphors at all, but plain statements of fact," (p. 246). Let us consider one or two difficulties which Professor Robertson surmounts by his metaphorical argument. First comes the fierceness of the pre-prophetic Yahveh and his close natural connection with consuming fire (p. 245). Is then the burning bush a metaphor? Is the pillar of cloud a metaphor? Is the fire which comes out from Yahveh and consumes transgressors a metaphor? Is the theophany upon Sinai a metaphor? It is really extraordinary that this should be supposed, and I can hardly believe that when these questions are directly put, Professor Robertson would venture to answer them in the affirmative. Again, if even the prophets by no means conceive God as we do, surely to their predecessors it was far easier still to combine a belief in divine justice (imperfect as it was) with a belief in divine violence. To us this combination seems impossible; not so to Moses and his successors. However much you may explain away the technically sacrificial character of Samuel's slaughter of Agag, that incident and others of a similar character cannot be got over in the estimate which we are led to form of men's conception of Yahveh's character before the coming of the prophets.

Nor can you use "the imperfection of language" to explain away the limitations of pre-prophetic monolatry. It seems to me most arbitrary to imply that Moses was as much a monotheist as Amos. Dr. Davidson's argument about the form of the First Commandment of the Decalogue is very inconclusive, even if that collection of laws be regarded as Mosaic. If the existence of other gods was not admitted, why not have worded the command, "There is no other God but Yahveh"? Deutero-Isaiah knew quite well how to say this: he did not find the Hebrew language so imperfect as not to be able to express monotheism by its terms. The phrase, "God of the Hebrews," means nothing, we are told, and never meant anything. But when we find

express theoretical monotheism taught, at the earliest, in the seventh century only, when we find a variety of phrases which, on the face of them, imply a belief in other gods, why, in the name of common sense, the claims of which have been so often violated, according to Professor Robertson, by the critics, should we hesitate to draw the obvious inference that monotheism, the greatest spiritual achievement of the Jewish race, was a conception of slow growth? It is none the more likely that there are more gods than one, because people thought for a long while that there were many. Professor Robertson makes the astonishing assertion, "the modern Jew would not admit that his nation's God is the Allah of the Mohammedan; but are we to say that the Jew is not yet a monotheist?" (p. 305). If Professor Robertson believes that the Jews have one God and the Mohammedans another, his own monotheism is imperfect, but let me emphatically tell him that the modern Jew does most strenuously hold that his nation's God is the Allah of the Mohammedans. The common Divine Father is a dogma of the synagogue: I had hitherto thought that it was a dogma of the church.

If metaphor is insufficient, you cannot explain away any the better by mere denial. Two examples. Professor Robertson thinks that "the idea that the Deity was supposed to reside in the ark is one of those precarious inferences from an old presumed animistic belief, which are not warranted by any positive evidence to be drawn from the documents" (p. 222). How, then, does Professor Robertson avoid the inferences which are commonly drawn from such well known passages as 1 S. iv. 3-8; v. 9; vi. 19, 20; 2 S. vi. 7, etc.? Then as to the ephod. Professor Robertson thinks he can get over the difficulty by pointing out that whereas Kuenen once thought that the word ephod never meant an image, he came afterwards to see the error of this opinion. It would have been perhaps more germane to the argument had Kuenen's change of view proceeded in the reverse direction. Even Gideon's ephod "may have been a coat of extraordinary magnificence, so heavy that it could stand alone, as we say" (p. 231). Our author does not deal with the relation of the ephod to the casting of the sacred lot, which seems to throw much light upon the unspiritual element in even the official religion of the pre-prophetic period, and his explanation of the passage Hosea iii. 4 is really almost comical (p. 239).

Professor Robertson also brings in the question of dates. Following Professor Davidson, he shows that one famous passage, on which the critics have been wont to lay much stress in their account of pre-prophetic belief, is on their own showing an interpolation of the seventh century (p. 303). He therefore argues that "lower" views

are no more a proof of early age than high views are a proof of late age. The low views can be explained as due either to imperfection of language, to Canaanite or underlying superstitions, or to metaphor. We have seen, however, that none of these explanations are really competent to explain the facts. Till better arguments are adduced we shall continue, in spite of Professor Robertson's protests against what he calls "sheer trifling," to regard such expressions as those in Judges xi. 24 as remnants of lower beliefs once universally held. Moreover, it does not well become Professor Robertson to make much use of an argument from dates. He more than once attempts to bring out a result by a combination of passages of different dates, and herein breaks his rule of meeting the critics on their own ground. Thus he is very hard upon the critical conception of Samuel and the origin of prophecy, calling Stade's account of the latter a "miserable travesty" of the facts (p. 89). But his own estimate of Samuel is obtained by assigning as much value to late Deuteronomistic passages as to the older narrative of Saul and the lost asses (p. 83). So, too, he tries to throw back the *practical* monotheism of the eighth century prophets by quoting the editorial passage Gen. xviii. 25 (p. 322). But Professor Robertson clearly does not himself think a question of dates of very much importance. What is the interval between Deborah and the supposed patriarchs? Several centuries at the least. But because in the Song of Deborah—which, by the way, according to Professor Robertson's proofless assertion, shows that "the tribes at that time had a much worthier conception of their national God" (p. 212) than the critics believe—because in this song, perhaps the earliest connected piece of writing in the whole Bible, we stand upon historical ground, it is argued that "it does not seem, after all, to be such an extravagant thing to believe that individuals named Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were positive historical characters" (p. 133). This is the kind of inference to which we are often treated by Professor Robertson.

Many other doubtful arguments might be criticised. For example, Professor Robertson makes much of the name Yahveh, which he naturally desires to connect with the verb "to be." "With the use of the name Jahveh," he thinks himself justified in asserting that the very advanced idea "seized the mind of Moses and his successors that the God they worshipped was one of ever-developing potency, an ever self-manifesting, ever actively-defending God" (p. 286), etc., etc. If this be so, it is very remarkable that the Yahvistic narrator supposes the knowledge and use of the name to be anterior even to Abraham. It is also very strange that with the exception of the single obscure verse in Exodus, no writer in

the Bible makes any use whatever of the wonderful meanings which the word is supposed to include and to convey. I have, however, already exceeded the limits of a review. Enough has been said, I think, to show that while Professor Robertson's book is often ingenious and suggestive, and may here and there correct a critical error or exaggeration, it leaves the main results of criticism entirely unshaken, and so far does not deserve the high encomium which a number of conservative critics have meted out to it. If the orthodox party intend to lean upon this book, I fear they will be no better off than Hezekiah was when he determined to depend upon Egypt. To them, too, might fitly be applied the warning of the Rab-shakeh. Whether even so they will be saved, remains to be seen.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE HEXATEUCH.

The Genesis of Genesis. By B. W. BACON. (Hartford: The Student Publishing Company, 1892.)

The Composition of the Book of Genesis. By E. I. FRIPP. (London: Nutt. 1892.)

Documents of the Hexateuch. Translated and arranged by W. E. ADDIS. Vol. I.—The Oldest Book of Hebrew History. (London: Nutt. 1892.)

THE first two of these three works deal with the same subject, but on a different scale. Our readers will be able to judge of their contents if we first indicate briefly the plan of each, and then notice some points of interest elucidated by them.

Professor Bacon's is the larger book, and is much the most complete edition of the kind in English, and, so far as we are aware, in any language. Kantzoch and Socin have produced their convenient German text, with the documents in different types. Professor Bacon does this also, using the English of the revised version. But he has made his edition pre-eminently useful and convenient by the thorough way in which he has executed his task. The varieties of type are well chosen and really distinctive, while by the use of smaller type of similar character he has been able to discriminate the editorial passages very helpfully. The foot-notes are reduced to the smallest limits, but are sufficient to show the suggested *rationale* of the analysis. And by a careful system of references the reader is enabled largely to check the results for himself. These results, moreover, where original, are frequently so ingenious and convincing as